

THE MAGNIFICAT
“The Big Picture”
Luke 1:39-56
Pastor Thomas Olson Faith Lutheran Church
November 27, 2005

Dear Faith Lutheran Congregation: I have rewritten this sermon from a year ago so that Gene can read it to you today. I pray that it will help you see that your life is an important part of God's big picture. Thank you for your prayers as we return home from our Thanksgiving visit to family in northern Wisconsin. Pastor Tom Olson

As I visit shut ins with communion I notice there are two kinds of people:

- 1) those who love to complain about their problems and wonder why God doesn't help them...
- 2) those who tell about the presence of Jesus in their lives and hesitate to complain about their problems...

There are two ways to view life: see the good big picture or get stuck in the negative details.

Here is another illustration: 3 construction workers are asked what they are doing...one says, “Laying bricks” the second says, “pounding nails,” the third looks up at the rising edifice and says, “I am building a cathedral.”

Our ability to live life with deep meaning and joy will depends on our ability to look beyond what the devil is doing and to focus on what God is doing. It is imperative that we always see the **good** big picture.

No one demonstrates that better than the Virgin Mary in Luke 1. Her great prophetic poem she gives us is called “The Magnificat” from the first word of the text in Latin meaning “to magnify or to exalt.” *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*—“My soul doth magnify the Lord.” In Greek the word is MEGALUNEI, to speak great or declare it big.

This pregnant, unmarried, peasant girl, traveling alone, far from home sees beyond her problems and bursts forth with a word of triumph...

Luke 1 gives us “The Magnificat”...the big picture, the exalted view....let's look at it.

THE BIG PICTURE OF GOD INCLUDES:

I. PERPLEXING PREDICAMENTS

39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;

40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

What a perplexing predicament she had. A mysterious pregnancy. A trip away from home. Unusual happenings with her cousin. Certainly a path she would not have planned.

Isaiah 55:8-9

***8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.***

***9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.***

Do you sometimes wonder why a dedicated Christian life can be so tough? When we are in the center of God's will for our lives it often takes us places that we never would have gone by our own choice. To live for the Lord may not be easy, but it is a life where you die with no regrets.

Secondly, even if the big plan of God has perplexing predicaments but it is equally encouraging as you notice that God has...

II. PERFECT PLANNING

41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

Mary's entry was on cue. Even the unborn baby John knew what was happening. Everybody was at the right place at the right time. The situation may have been perplexing but the fingerprint of God was on it.

Isaiah 55:11

11 So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth;

It shall not return to Me empty,

Without accomplishing what I desire,

And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. NAS

As we live our lives in complete surrender to the will of God it is amazing how perfect the timing is from the Lord. When I left Alaska I didn't know what the future of the mission would be but God knew ahead of time that Doug and Jan Niesen would be in Cloquet, undergoing health problems, going into early retirement, just in time to help out with the pastoral ministry in Naknek. God's timing is flawless. He knows what He is doing. It is exiting to be a part of His **perfect planning**. Thirdly, his big plan also includes...

III. PROPHETIC POWER

42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

Elizabeth got a special "word from the Lord" to confirmed what was happening. This is the type of activity that is predicted in Joel 2:28:

*28 "And it will come about after this
That I will pour out My
Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons **and daughters** will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.*

When we are a part of God's perfect plan it will always be confirmed by the Word...primarily by Scripture...and also by words of wisdom from gifted believers. This is the prophetic power of God. Fourthly, the big picture includes...

IV. PREDOMINANT PRIORITIES

*46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,
47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

Right away Mary identifies the point of it all. She rejoices that God is **her Savior**. She realizes that she is another daughter of Eve that is carrying the blood line that will redeem the world. In spite of the humiliation and stress she tells her messenger angel, "Behold, the handmaiden of the Lord." Every test and trial, every blessing and provision, every major event that God allows is ultimately for the purpose of bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. Even the war in Iraq has brought more Bibles and Testaments to the entire Middle East than any other event could. I am praying that there will be ten Iraqies saved for every American soldier that is killed.

A man named Dove Wiseman is a missionary to Egypt. He told a friend of mine how the Egyptians literally mob him when he comes to Cairo with sacks of Bibles. They don't mob him to hurt him as we may expect. They mob him to get a copy of the Word of God. They Muslims secretly want a Bible more than anything. They are hungry to know about Jesus and His love.

2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

Salvation is God's predominant priority in all things. Fifthly, Mary goes on to tell about the big plan of God which is happening through...

V. PREFERED PARTICIPANTS

48 *For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.*

God gives grace to the humble. God gives his greatest assignments to the humble. When we humble ourselves...God can use us.

Mary and Elizabeth knew that they were nothing. Elizabeth was old and barren, but God chose her to be the mother of the great prophet John the Baptist. Mary was an unmarried virgin and God chose her to be the mother of the Messiah. Who remembers the proud leaders of the day? But the humble people be the main character in our Christmas programs.

God gives grace to the humble, doesn't he? God gives wonderful opportunities to those who think more highly of others than they do of themselves. Number 6, God's big picture includes...

VI. PUNISHING PRIDE

51b *he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.*

52 *He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.*

It is amazing how the arrogant eventually fall. God hates pride.

Here is another illustration from my years in the ministry. I can think of a number of pastors in our fellowship 20 years ago that were proud. They never noticed a common person like me. At meetings they never sat down at my table to talk to

me. Most of them had the high paying and successful churches. Most of them are gone today...prematurely dead, fallen into sin, even in prison...

It is very important that we do not envy the proud because their days are numbered.

Back to Psalm 37

1 Do not fret because of evildoers, Be not envious toward wrongdoers.

2 For they will wither quickly like the grass, And fade like the green herb.

10 Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; And you will look carefully for his place, and he will not be there.

38 But transgressors will be altogether destroyed; The posterity of the wicked will be cut off.

90 year-old Augusto Pinochet is the former dictator of Chile. He and some 300 generals brutally tortured, terrorized, raped and robbed the people of Chile. Today those same proud dictators are being brought to justice and thrown in prison.

God sees every move of men from heaven. He hears every word that we utter. He knows even the thoughts and the intentions of our hearts. Saddam Hussein is in prison, Osama bin Laden is on the run, the USSR is broken up. God punishes the proud and exalts the humble.

What is the future of America? What is the future of our congregation? What is the future of you and me? Are we proud or are we humble? God punishes pride and seventhly, his big picture, His magnificat, includes...

VII. POVERTY PREVENTION

53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

One of the main reasons for lack of provision is lack of faith. Africa is a good example. In the countries where the leadership believe in Jesus and follow the Bible there is plenty and peace. In the countries where the leaders worship idols or are Muslim there is constant war, disease and starvation. In Sudan the leaders are so wicked that they do everything they can to kill Christians. But Franklin Graham

recently stated that every time they kill a Christians, hundreds more give their hearts to Jesus.

Psalm 37

*23 The steps of a man are established by the LORD;
And He delights in his way.*

*24 When he falls, he shall not be hurled headlong;
Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand.*

*25 I have been young, and now I am old;
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken,
Or his descendants begging bread.*

When you see more and more people quitting church, not bringing their children to Sunday School, playing the lottery, living for the moment, sending their kids to sports rather than youth group, it must be tempting for many dedicated Christian families to join into the modern materialistic frenzy. But I assure you that God will not forget his obedient children. God will not forget those who love His Word and would rather be in the humble house of the Lord than the shimmering palaces of worldly pleasures. Those who pursue righteousness will see their children's children remain in the faith and be blessed. God takes care of His children with poverty prevention.

Finally, we see that God's big plan focuses on a....

VIII. PROPHETIC PEOPLE

54 He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;

55 As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever.

The nation of Israel is God's prophetic timepiece. Israel has hundreds of promises in the Bible yet unfulfilled. God cannot lie. He will not go back on his promises. One day the nation of Israel will occupy every inch of land God promised them. The desert will bloom. They will dwell in safety. Jerusalem will be elevated upon a high mountain. Nations will come up to celebrate the feasts of the Lord. David will reign over them again in righteousness. There is no question in my mind that the world is focused on Jerusalem for one reason...that is because God has willed it to be so. Not one dotted I or crossed T in the Bible will be left unfulfilled. What God promised to the descendants of Isaac will be done. God has helped Israel, God has spoken to the fathers, to Abraham, to his seed forever.

I think Romans 11 is one of the most important chapters in our Bible for this time of history but it is an almost unread chapter of the great book of Romans. Read for yourself God's future plans for the nation of Israel. It culminates with the great statement that *all Israel will be saved*.

The whole nation of Israel will turn to Jesus just before He returns. A few years ago you could hardly find a Jewish Christian in Israel. Pastor Barnhart told us this fall that in the past couple of years there has been over 300 Messianic Congregations established with over 10,000 new Jewish believers in Jesus the Messiah, or as they call him, Yeshua Ha Mashia. These are the days of Elijah. Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Israel is a prophetic people!

CONCLUSION- Today the Virgin Mary gives us The Magnificat-the big picture-the exalted view of what God is doing in the world. God is carrying out the plan of the ages and we can be a part.

How do you view your life? Are you looking at the good big picture? Do you complain about your daily trials or do you see them as the natural consequence of being a player in the unseen battle of the ages? Dear friends, are you saved? Are you on the winning team? Are you fighting for Jesus? If not, accept Christ today.

As the days get more evil it is imperative that we set our priorities based upon God's big picture, the Magnificat. Mary did, Elizabeth did...that is a life with no regrets. Amen